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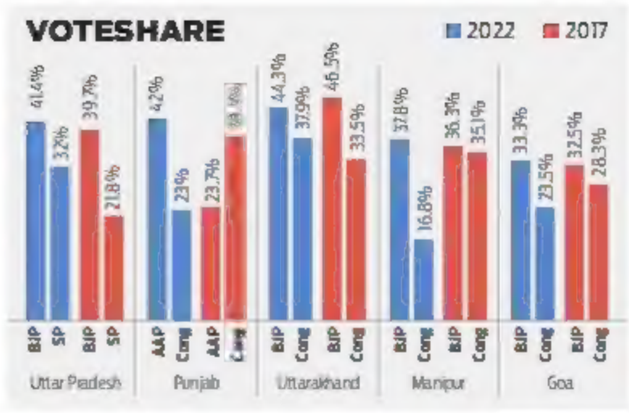

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Results highlight people's strong approval for BJP's pro-poor pro-active governance

Narendra Modi

First this revolution happened in Delhi, then in Punjab and it will now happen all over

Arvind Kejriwal

Humbly accept the people's verdict. We will keep working for people

Rahul Gandhi

Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal celebrates his party's emphatic win in Punjab; (right) UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has an early Holi with BJP leaders | PRAVEEN NEGI / PTI

SAFFRON WAVE
Verdict for 2024 elections: Modi

Winning four out of five Assembly elections has further bolstered the chances of the BJP's win in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi

UP-proval. AAPrising.

● BJP breaks jinx to retain UP, Uttarakhand ● Set to form govts in Goa and Manipur ● Kejriwal pulls off a stunning victory in Punjab; exhorts people across country to join AAP and change the system ● Severe Congress drubbing in all the five states

TOP LOSERS

CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI (CONGRESS)

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI (BJP)

NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU (CONGRESS)

AMARINDER SINGH (PLC)

TOP WINNERS

YOGI ADITYANATH (BJP)

AKHILESH YADAV (SP)

SATPAL MAHARAJ (BJP)

PRAMOD SAWANT (BJP)

SHAHID FARIDI @ New Delhi

THE BJP broke a decades-old jinx to retain power in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, even as Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party pulled off a stunning victory in Punjab to become the only regional party to rule in two states. And the Congress faced severe drubbing in all the five states that went to polls.

The BJP is also set to form governments in Manipur with simple majority, and in Goa where it stopped short of getting a full majority.

Making the victory speech at the BJP's national headquarters at New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that the result of 2022 assembly elections has sealed the fate of 2024 general elections.

The BJP's exuberance is not misplaced as it has proved wrong all the political pundits who had predicted the party's rout in the Jat-dominated western Uttar Pradesh which was the epicentre of farmers' agitation. As results started pouring in, it became evident that western UP had voted resoundingly in favour of the BJP. The party's strike rate in western UP was better than the main rival — Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal combine.

The BJP performed equally well in all other regions of the state. The social coalition cobbled together by the party and the welfare schemes, including free ration to the poor, paid rich dividends. The party swept most of the constituen-

PM Narendra Modi being garlanded by Rajnath Singh, J P Nadda and Amit Shah | SHEKHAR YADAV

cies having a large Dalit population indicating a huge shift of Dalits towards the BJP.

This shift of the Dalit vote dealt a deadly blow to Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party whose tally fell to a single digit for the first time since it started contesting elections in UP. Mayawati has suffered huge setbacks in the last five elections in UP and her party's vote share has continued to shrink over the last 10 years. She has, however, retained support of a large chunk of Jatavs, the caste she belongs to, and a few other numerically smaller castes. This seems to be the only vote left with her. But whether she would be able to bounce back from here is a million dollar question.

The other big story of this election is the stunning victory pulled off by AAP which is poised to win over 90 out of 117 assembly seats. Buoyed by the success, Kejriwal laid bare his national ambition by exhorting people across the country to join AAP "to change the system".

CONTINUED ON: P10

PUNJAB
Total Seats: 117
2022
AAP 92 • INC 18 • SAD 3
• BJP 2 • BSP 1 • Ind 1
2017
AAP 20 • INC 77 • SAD 15
• BJP 3 • BSP 0 • Ind 1
UTTARAKHAND
Total Seats: 70
2022
BJP 47 • INC 19 • BSP 2 • Ind 2
2017
BJP 57 • INC 11 • BSP 0 • Ind 2
MANIPUR
Total Seats: 60
2022
BJP 32 • NPP 7 • JDU 6 • INC 5
• NPF 5 • Oth 5
2017
BJP 21 • NPP 4 • JDU 0 • INC 28
• NPF 4 • Oth 2
GOA
Total Seats: 40
2022
BJP 20 • INC 11 • Ind 3
• AAP 2 • Oth 4
2017
BJP 13 • INC 17 • Ind 3
• AAP (-) • Oth 6

*2022 data shows wins/leads as per EC website

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EXPECT SHIFT IN OPPN DYNAMICS

RICHA SHARMA @ New Delhi

THE decimation of the Congress in the state elections is set to hasten the dominance of regional players in the next general elections in 2024. After spectacularly breaking the Punjab duopoly of the Congress or the Shiromani Akali Dal taking turns to rule the state, the AAP claimed bragging rights of becoming the national alternative to the grand old party. AAP founder Arvind Kejriwal could fancy his chances of becoming the pivot of Opposition unity, a position Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee and TRS boss K Chandrashekar Rao are already vying for.

The Congress no longer has a solid counter as it self-detonated itself in Punjab, messed up its best chance of wresting Uttarakhand and let Goa slip out. At present, it is in power only in two states, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Besides, it is not in good health in at least one of the two states that will go to polls later this year, Gujarat and Himachal.

As AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh quipped, "Does Congress contest elections for winning? They are engaged in so much infighting and end up contesting each other." But Congress leader R S Surjewala said a nine-year-old party cannot replace the Congress legacy of seven decades and its status as the principal Opposition party.

Going forward, NCP chief Sharad Pawar emphasised on the need to initiate a process to evolve an effective alternative to the BJP. All like-minded parties will sit together during the month-long Parliament session starting March 14 to discuss the future course of action, he informed. P9,10,16

EXPRESS READ

Results will have +ve impact in K'taka: CM

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday said the BJP's victory in four state Assembly elections will have a positive effect in Karnataka, which goes to polls in 2023. "The results have filled our workers with enthusiasm. We are confident that the people will elect us in 2023," he said. P4

Cong will win K'taka in 2023, claims Siddu

Bengaluru: Congress Legislature Party leader Siddaramaiah on Thursday said the party's prospects in the 2023 Assembly polls in Karnataka will not be affected. He expressed confidence that the Congress will form the government in the state. "We will reinvigorate the party," he said. P4

Supersonic Indian projectile entered our airspace: Pak

Islamabad: Pakistan Army on Thursday claimed it detected a high flying projectile coming into its airspace allegedly from India. It said the projectile crashed in its Punjab province. "From initial course, it deviated and entered Pakistan and fell in Pakistani territory, causing some damage to civilian installations but no loss of life was reported," Army spokesman Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar said

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